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CLAIMS:

1.   An alert control method in telephone equipment having an alert function, comprising the steps of:

a) storing time data related to a name of a person to communicate with in a phonebook database;

b) determining based on the time data whether a predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person; and

c) alerting when it is determined that the predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person.

2.   The alert control method according to claim 1, wherein the time data is a last-communication time of day at which communication with the person was made last.

3.   The alert control method according to claim 2, wherein the step (b) comprises the steps of:

b.1) reading a current time of day from a timer;

b.2) calculating an elapsed time from the last-communication time of day to the current time of day; and

b.3) determining whether the elapsed time exceeds the predetermined time interval.

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4.   The alert control method according to claim 2,
wherein the last-communication time of day is initially set to
a time of day when data related to the person is registered into
the phonebook database.

5   5.   The alert control method according to claim 2,
wherein the last-communication time of day is updated each time
communication with the person is terminated.

6.   The alert control method according to claim 1,
wherein the predetermined time interval is arbitrarily
10   determined depending on a user's instruction.

7.   The alert control method according to claim 1,
wherein the alerting of the step (c) is performed by driving at
least one of a speaker, a vibrator, and a display.

8.   An alert control method in telephone equipment
15   having an alert function, comprising the steps of:
        a) storing a last-communication time of day related
to a name of each of a plurality of persons to communicate with
in a phonebook database;
        b) dividing the plurality of persons into a plurality
20   of groups;

c) determining a before-alert time interval for each of the groups, wherein the before-alert time interval is a time interval during which communication with the person is not made before alerting;

5   d) determining whether the before-alert time interval has elapsed after the last-communication time of day; and

e) alerting when it is determined that the before-alert time interval has elapsed after the last-
10   communication time of day.

9.   The alert control method according to claim 8, wherein the last-communication time of day is initially set to a time of day when data related to the person is registered into the phonebook database.

15   10.   The alert control method according to claim 8, wherein the last-communication time of day is updated each time communication with the person is terminated.

11.   An alert control method in telephone equipment having an alert function, comprising the steps of:
20   a) storing time data related to a name of a person to communicate with in a phonebook database;

b) storing an alert-inhibition time period during

which alert is inhibited;

c) determining based on the time data whether a predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person;

5   d) alerting when a current time of day falls out of the alert-inhibition time period and it is determined that the predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person; and

e) inhibiting alert when the current time of day

10 falls into the alert-inhibition time period even if it is determined that the predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person.

12.   The alert control method according to claim 11, wherein the time data is a last-communication time of day at which

15 communication with the person was made last.

13.   The alert control method according to claim 11, wherein the alerting of the step (d) is performed by driving at least one of a speaker, a vibrator, and a display.

14.   The alert control method according to claim 13,

20 wherein, in the step (e), an audible alert by the speaker and/or the vibrator is inhibited and a silent alert on the display is permitted.

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15.   The alert control method according to claim 1,
further comprising the steps of:

d) storing an alert list containing persons targeted
for alert;

5   e) displaying the alert list in form of a menu on
a display so that a desired one is selected from the alert list
to make a call to the desired one.

16.   The alert control method according to claim 8,
further comprising the steps of:

10   f) storing an alert list containing persons targeted
for alert;

g) displaying the alert list in form of a menu on
a display so that a desired one is selected from the alert list
to make a call to the desired one.

15   17.   The alert control method according to claim 11,
further comprising the steps of:

f) storing an alert list containing persons targeted
for alert;

g) displaying the alert list in form of a menu on
20   a display so that a desired one is selected from the alert list
to make a call to the desired one.

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18.   A telephone apparatus having an alert function, comprising:

a phonebook database for storing time data related to a name of a person to communicate with; and

5   a controller for determining based on the time data whether a predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person and starting the alert function when it is determined that the predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person.

10   19.   A telephone apparatus having an alert function, comprising:

a phonebook database for storing a last-communication time of day related to a name of each of a plurality of persons to communicate with, wherein the plurality of persons
15   is divided into a plurality of groups; and

a controller for determining a before-alert time interval for each of the groups, wherein the before-alert time interval is a time interval during which communication with the person is not made before alerting, determining whether the
20   before-alert time interval has elapsed after the last-communication time of day, and starting the alert function when it is determined that the before-alert time interval has elapsed after the last-communication time of day.

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20.   A telephone apparatus having an alert function, comprising:

a phonebook database for storing time data related to a name of a person to communicate with;

5   an alert-inhibition timetable storing an alert-inhibition time period during which alert is inhibited; and

a controller for determining based on the time data whether a predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person, starting the alert function when

10   a current time of day falls out of the alert-inhibition time period and it is determined that the predetermined time interval has elapsed without communicating with the person, and inhibiting alert when the current time of day falls into the alert-inhibition time period even if it is determined that the predetermined time

15   interval has elapsed without communicating with the person.